Location and Contact Information

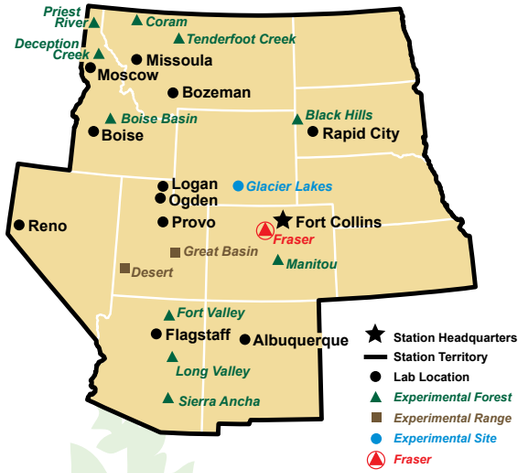
Fraser Experimental Forest is administered by RMRS and jointly managed by RMRS and the Sulphur Ranger District of the Arapaho National Forest.

For more information:

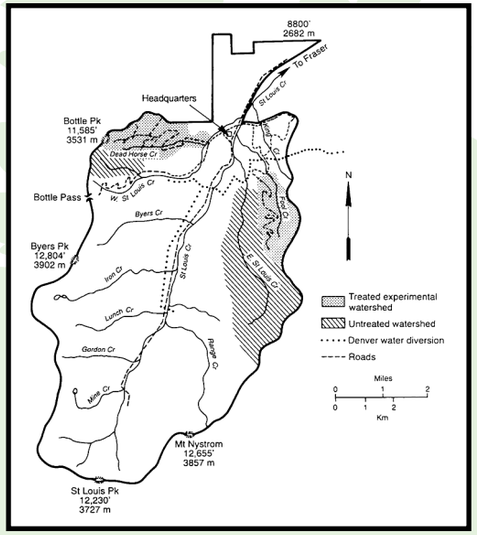
Rocky Mountain Research Station
Fort Collins, Colorado
970-498-1100

www.fs.usda.gov/fraser

Map of the Rocky Mountain Research Station



Map of Fraser Experimental Forest



Map from RM-GTR-233: "Flora of the Fraser Experimental Forest, Colorado"

Rocky Mountain Research Station

The Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS) is one of seven units within U.S. Forest Service Research and Development – the most extensive natural resources research organization in the world. RMRS maintains 12 field laboratories throughout a 12-state territory encompassing parts of the Great Basin, Southwest, Rocky Mountains and the Great Plains.

RMRS administers and conducts research on 14 Experimental Forests and Ranges (EF&R) in seven states. The U.S. Forest Service's EF&R network represents many of the ecosystem types found in the United States and Puerto Rico. Most EF&Rs contain significant acreage and many encompass large experimental study sites that are used to examine the effects of operational-scale treatments such as prescribed burning and forest thinning. RMRS also oversees activities on several hundred Research Natural Areas, which have been set aside to conduct research while conserving biological diversity.

For more information:

Rocky Mountain Research Station
240 West Prospect Road
Fort Collins, CO 80526-2098
970-498-1100

www.fs.fed.us/rmrs
www.twitter.com/usfs_rmrs/

USDA United States Department of Agriculture

Fraser Experimental Forest

An outdoor laboratory in the heart of the Rocky Mountains

Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station

Unique Testing Environments

A natural outdoor laboratory covering 23,000 acres in north central Colorado, Fraser Experimental Forest is a part of the U.S. Forest Service's Experimental Forest and Range (EF&R) system. The EF&R system, which was created in 1908, is a network of protected places that are used for long-term land and resource research and management.

A Lifetime of Research

Unlike other Experimental Forests, Fraser straddles an alpine/subalpine environment that allows for a wide range of research studies both above and below the timberline. When it was established in 1937, Fraser's purpose was to measure the impact of tree harvest on water yield and sediment production. The Experimental Forest's large size provides opportunities to study multiple watersheds in topography ranging from rugged mountains to broad valleys. Fraser Experimental Forest is one of the only research sites in the Rocky Mountains that maintain long-term records on hydrology, climate, forest structure and growth, and responses to forest management. Some research data dates back more than 70 years, providing an invaluable record of climate and forest watershed changes over time.

Research has been conducted at Fraser Experimental Forest since 1937.

A Wealth of Resources

Located in the heart of the central Rocky Mountains, Fraser is an area full of panoramic views and winding streams, rich in wildlife that includes bears, deer, elk, moose, mountain goats, bobcats and beavers. Trees include Engelmann spruce, subalpine fir and lodgepole pine. As part of the Arapaho & Roosevelt National Forest, Fraser Experimental Forest's public uses include hiking, mountain biking, snowshoeing, skiing, horseback riding, and fishing, as well as camping at the St. Louis Creek Campground. While some recreation is allowed at Fraser, we ask for visitors' understanding when research areas with ongoing experiments and sensitive instruments are closed to public use. Fraser Experimental Forest visitors can help scientists by:

- only using motor vehicles, snowmobiles, bicycles and skis on designated roads or trails,
- not trespassing in research study areas,
- understanding and respecting the need for road closures (both for public safety and integrity of research studies), and
- camping only in designated areas at the St. Louis Creek Campground.

Researchers can utilize Fraser's facilities, which include a 12-bed dormitory, a kitchen, a laboratory and outdoor data-gathering equipment. These facilities are used for year-round ecological and environmental research, education and training.

Managing Our Forests and Water Supply

Today more than ever, water is a key factor to development along Colorado's Front Range and other western states. Water supply research continues at Fraser Experimental Forest for a good reason: The St. Louis Creek watershed is similar to the many other headwater streams that supply water for the Denver area, making it an ideal testing area. Researchers also study a wide range of other topics at Fraser, from the effects of harvesting and forest thinning techniques on water quality and quantity, to the response of forests to the bark beetle epidemic and climate change. Much of this work is done in cooperation with a wide variety of research partners.

Fraser Experimental Forest includes beetle kill areas such as the "Red Hand of Death," photographed in 2006.

Just the Facts: Fraser Experimental Forest is …

- A 36-square-mile outdoor research laboratory in the heart of the Rocky Mountains.
- Located 50 miles northwest of Denver in the Arapaho National Forest, a few miles southwest of Fraser, Colorado.
- Adjacent to Byers Peak Wilderness Area to the west and Vasquez Wilderness Area to the east.
- Home to the oldest known Engelmann spruce tree in the world, with an estimated age of more than 870 years old.
- One of the only research sites in the Rocky Mountain region with more than 70 years of recorded data for snow depth, streamflow and weather.
- Unique among federally managed research sites for its span of alpine to lower subalpine ecosystems, with elevations ranging from 8,850 feet (2696 meters) to 12,804 feet (3903 meters).
- Used by scientists conducting research on water quantity and quality, forest management, riparian habitats, invasive species, insects (including mountain pine beetle), wildlife, soil, and climate.
- Open for year-round approved scientific use, with facilities including a 12-room dormitory, kitchen and laboratory.